

HB 445: Abbreviated form of Certified Ballot
House State Administration, RM 455
February 19, 2013 @ 8:00 a.m.
Secretary of State Linda McCulloch's Testimony

- Good morning Madam Chair, members of the Committee. For the record, I am Linda McCulloch, Montana Secretary of State.
- This measure will provide efficiencies in the elections process and cost-savings to county governments.
- It is a good bill, with at least one critical component. Requiring Election Administrators to provide the full language of each ballot issue at the polling place is essential.
 - Lines 8-10 state "the information contained in subsections (2)(a) through (2)(h) must be distributed to each elector by an election judge as the elector enters the polling place."
- It is only with this assurance that I can support abbreviating the ballot. In 2007, the abbreviated ballot was removed from law because the full language was not provided at some polling places.
- With this bill, it won't be a choice. Election Administrators and poll workers will have to provide the information to each elector. This guaranteed access to information will help to inform voters and ensure the integrity of each election.
- Election Day isn't the first time voters are exposed to ballot issues, and the polling place isn't the only place this information will be available.
- The Voter Information Pamphlet, which counties mail out before each statewide general election to every household with at least one registered voter, includes an explanatory statement for each issue, a fiscal statement, full ballot language, and proponent and opponent arguments and rebuttals.
- Absentee voters can review the VIP at their leisure, without having to make a trip to the polls. The VIP is also available on our website, and in alternate formats including large print and Braille.
- When one vote can change the outcome of an election, access to information is essential.

- This bill provides that access in a common-sense approach by allowing abbreviated ballot language – but still requiring that the full ballot language be available at the polling place.
- I ask that you vote “yes”. Thank you for your time.